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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [UNSC](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: UNSC: UNSCR 1701 QUARTERLY CONSULTATIONS -
HIGHLIGHTS POSSIBLE MOVEMENT ON GHAJAR; CONTINUED CONCERN
ABOUT HIZBALLAH ARMS

REF: STATE 124111

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro Wolff for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11.](#) (SBU) Summary: On November 26, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams and DPKO Assistant Secretary-General Edmund Mulet briefed the Security Council in consultations on the SYG's UNSCR 1701 quarterly report. Williams noted the improved political climate in Lebanon but emphasized the continuing threat to the Lebanese State posed by armed groups. Both Williams and Mulet referred to the Israeli offer to start discussions with the UN on northern Ghajar. Williams stressed the arms embargo as a key element of UNSCR 1701 and new Syrian willingness to cooperate on border coordination with Lebanon. He said the Syrian FM had clearly told him that Syria recognizes Sheba'a as Lebanese territory.

In response to questions from member states, Mulet noted that LAF redeployments out of the UNIFIL area of responsibility would last only until the end of the year and would be balanced by greater coordination between the LAF and UNIFIL. Neither Williams nor Mulet had any further information beyond the one media report about Hizballah exercises north and south of the Litani. Member states' interventions echoed the same themes as their comments on Lebanon in the monthly Middle East consultations. End summary.

UNSCOL briefing

[12.](#) (SBU) On November 26, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams and DPKO Assistant Secretary-General Edmund Mulet briefed the Security Council in consultations on the SYG's UNSCR 1701 quarterly report. Williams, in his first briefing to the Council as Special Coordinator, noted his recent meetings with the President, Prime Minister, and Speaker in Lebanon and the improved political climate. He stressed that there had been major political improvements in Lebanon and between Lebanon and Syria over the last six months. Nevertheless, he emphasized that one cannot overstate the threats armed groups in Lebanon pose to the state and therefore said the national dialogue process is essential and that he hoped none of the parties would derail it through short-sighted electoral interests. On landmines and cluster bombs, he noted the extraordinary progress made in clearing some 75 percent of the area though significant areas remain un-cleared. He said having the technical strike data would help enormously and he would continue to press the Israeli government for it.

[13.](#) (SBU) While he left it to his DPKO counterpart A/SYG Mulet to speak on recent progress on northern Ghajar, Williams pledged to work with UNIFIL General Graziano on a speedy resolution of northern Ghajar. (Note: Later on in the session, Williams noted his regret that the Israeli response on Ghajar had only come on November 20 and that it had not been more positive, given that the IDF had withdrawn from

there in 2000. He said the UN would explore the issue as a matter of urgency with Israel and he hoped would come to a resolution. End note.) Williams stressed that the arms embargo is a key element of 1701 but noted that the Syrians had stressed to him that they are not involved in arms transfers and want to cooperate with enforcement of their border with Lebanon. He noted that there had been some progress on increased border coordination between the two sides and welcomed the November 10 meeting in Damascus between the Lebanese Interior Minister and his Syrian counterpart. Williams said he was looking for the exchange of ambassadors between Lebanon and Syria before the end of the year but noted there had been no progress made on border delineation. He said he would move forward to engage all of the parties on Sheba'a and noted that Israeli authorities have invited him to visit Sheba'a. In response to a French question, he said the Syrian FM had very clearly told him that Syria recognizes Sheba'a as Lebanese though Syria was not willing to assist the UN with maps or other documentation (in response to the UN's 2007 letter).

DPKO briefing

14. (SBU) DPKO A/SYG Mulet noted that UNIFIL continues to "assertively perform" 400 patrols per day, including 100 at night. He did announce, that since the publication of the quarterly report, Israeli FM Livni had conveyed to the SYG on November 20 a willingness to initiate discussions on northern Ghajar but had set no date for an Israeli withdrawal. Mulet said the SYG had conveyed the Israeli decision to Lebanese PM Siniora on November 21. He said that while the modalities

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can be discussed, Israel is obliged to withdraw and noted that it would strengthen security in the area and show that a solution can be found diplomatically. He also noted one Blue Line incident since the report's publication - eight IDF soldiers crossed the Blue Line on November 18 and a UNIFIL contingent immediately intervened. Mulet said the crossing was inadvertent but that it demonstrated another reason to visibly mark the Blue Line. He noted that continuous Israeli overflights are violations of 1701 and should stop. He reiterated the outstanding request for the cluster munitions strike data and referred to the September death of a Belgian peacekeeper while de-mining.

15. (C) Mulet obliquely referred to LAF redeployments out of the AOR by saying there was heightened UNIFIL and LAF cooperation given LAF responsibilities elsewhere (i.e. significant redeployments). Several states later asked Mulet about LAF redeployments out of the UNIFIL area of responsibility (AOR), to which Mulet responded that the LAF said they would be temporary and would be balanced with greater coordination between the LAF and UNIFIL. He said that the LAF numbers in the AOR would be increased by the end of this year. Mulet did not mention any of the violations from the AOR noted in the report, such as the freedom of movement violations and the individuals found with firearms. (Comment: Ambassador Wolff did specifically comment to Mulet afterwards that he had found his briefing to be one-sided and that he expected it would be more balanced in the future. End comment.)

Member states comment on situation

16. (SBU) Following Williams and Mulet's briefing in consultations, 13 member states spoke, along the same themes as their comments on Lebanon in the monthly Middle East consultations. The French PolCouns and UK DPR stressed their concerns about Hizballah rearming. On border management, the UK called for Lebanese ownership of the issue, but they were supportive of the Prime Minister's proposed donor steering committee. They noted their concerns that LAF deployment remains under-strength and asked if it would be reinforced.

The Croatian PR also voiced concern that the key provisions of 1701 have not been met, specifically that armed groups remain a serious threat to the state. He welcomed steps by Lebanon and Syria to move forward on border delineation and supported the SYG's efforts on Sheba'a. The Belgian representative said the current window of opportunity with the improvement in the political situation must be used wisely. He called for a strengthened arms embargo, progress on Sheba'a and Ghajar, and stressed Belgium's commitment to UNIFIL and noted that Belgium will soon take over the maritime section. Ambassador Wolff gave the U.S. remarks (largely drawn from reftel) and emphasized that the rearmament of Hizballah remains the most important matter for the Council to consider in Lebanon with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security.

¶7. (SBU) The Russian DPR also recognized the positive shift in the Lebanese political situation and highlighted the Lebanese Interior Minister's visit to Damascus as the "recipe for future success." He, too, called for a strengthening of border security along the Syrian-Lebanese border and noted his disappointment with continued Israeli overflights which he termed a violation of 1701 and a blow to the GOL. The Libyan DPR said the Council should not intervene in the internal affairs of the Lebanese state but did note the positive political events of the last six months. He reaffirmed the territorial integrity of Lebanon and condemned Israeli overflights. He said the GOL has complied with UNSCR 1701, aside from the requirement to deal with militia weaponry which he described as a delicate matter that must be handled politically and domestically. The Indonesian DPR voiced concern that the main goal of UNSCR 1701 (a permanent cease-fire) is far from a reality. He called for visibly marking the Blue line, an end to overflights, a resolution of cluster munitions, an end to the occupation of northern Ghajar, the disarmament of militias through a Lebanese-led process, progress on the arms embargo, and voiced Indonesia's continued commitment as a troop contributor to UNIFIL.

Media report of Hizballah exercises

¶8. (SBU) The UK DPR was the first to raise the media report about Hizballah exercises north and south of the Litani and asked if more could be said about that. Ambassador Wolff also raised the matter in the U.S. statement, as did the Croatians. After member states' statements, both Williams and Mulet commented. Williams said that there was only one

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